Wound Care

The risk for injury during and after a hurricane and other natural disasters is high. Prompt first aid can help heal small wounds and prevent infection. Tetanus is a potential health threat for persons who have open wounds.

Seek medical attention as soon as possible if:

- There is a foreign object embedded in the wound
- The wound is at special risk of infection, such as a dog bite or a puncture by a dirty object
- An old wound shows signs of becoming infected. Symptoms on infection include increased pain and soreness, swelling, redness, draining, or you develop a fever.

How to Care for Minor Wounds

- Wash your hands thoroughly with soap and clean water if possible.
- Avoid touching the wound with your fingers while treating it (if possible, use disposable, latex gloves)
- Remove obstructive jewelry and clothing from the injured body part
- Apply direct pressure to any bleeding wound to control bleeding
- Clean the wound after bleeding has stopped
    - Examine wounds for dirt and foreign objects
    - Gently flood the wound with bottled water or clean running water (if available, saline solution is preferred)
    - Gently clean around the wound with soap and clean water
    - Pat dry and apply an adhesive bandage or dry clean cloth
    - Leave unclean wounds, bites, and punctures open. Wounds that are not cleaned correctly can trap bacteria and result in infection
    - Take pain relievers if needed

Other Considerations

- A variety of infections can occur in wounds exposed to standing water, and ocean water
- Wounds in contact with soil and sand can become infected
- Puncture wounds can carry bits of clothing and dirt into wounds and result in infection
- Crush injuries are more likely to become infected than wounds from cuts

If you have wounds, you should be evaluated for a tetanus immunization. If you receive a puncture wound or a wound contaminated with feces, soil, or saliva, have a health care professional determine whether a tetanus booster is necessary.